

Setting targets and benchmarks for Puget Sound – status update October 9, 2009

Background

The Partnership is advancing toward implementing the performance management system for the Action Agenda by mid-2010. This system will ultimately include quantitative targets for ecosystem components, threat reduction, and actions. As part of the State of the Sound report due to the Governor and Legislature on November 1, 2009, the Partnership has been working to identify quantitative targets that could be set for the region. This memo summarizes the work accomplished to date, advice from the Cross-Partnership Performance Management Work Group and ECB members, and a staff recommendation about what to include in the State of the Sound report.

To assist the staff and advise the Leadership Council on the overall performance system, the Cross-Partnership Performance Management Work Group was convened with a near-term charge to advise on setting the targets, including what targets to pursue and quantitative outcomes. The group met five times during August and September 2009. The final meeting was broadened to include interested ECB members in order to provide additional input to the Leadership Council in a timely way.

Work to date

Using input from the July ECB meeting, the Partnership first focused the work on developing results chains that focus on linking actions from the Action Agenda to threats and ecosystem goals in seven topical areas: land protection (growth and development), wastewater, urban stormwater runoff, invasive species, river and estuary restoration, marine nearshore restoration, and water withdrawal and diversion. Thirty-three meetings – engaging 41 scientific and policy experts from the public, private, NGO, and academic sectors across all seven topic areas – have been held over the last six weeks to advance this work. In their current state, the results chains in these seven areas capture the relevant activities called out in the Action Agenda and provide a clear conceptual picture of how these actions contribute to reducing key threats to the ecosystem.

The overall direction from David Dicks, the Leadership Council, and the Cross-PSP work group is to try to identify quantifiable targets by November that have some scientific basis, and to first focus the quantifiable targets on reducing threats to the ecosystem. In addition, David Dicks is particularly interested in advancing those targets related to stormwater runoff.

At the September 29, 2009 meeting, the work group and ECB members reviewed specific threat reduction objectives that could be considered for each of the seven results chains.

Summary Input from the Work Group and ECB members

- Setting threat reduction targets is needed and useful, and these targets should be presented in the State of the Sound report. However, the reduction targets should be presented as “examples” under discussion and a work in progress. No threat reduction objectives are ready to adopt or be put forth as a proposal. More review and discussion is needed.
- Representative examples across all or most chains should be included in the State of the Sound report.
- Although there were no objectives related to land cover and growth and development ready for presentation at the September 29th meeting, the group concluded that such objectives must be included in the State of the Sound. This is the heart of the matter.
- Tie the threat reduction targets to “being bold”. Examples cited included acres of shellfish beds reopened, setting impervious surface limits by watershed, reduction in miles of shoreline hardening, and something on salmon recovery.
- Simple is better. The list of options for objectives under discussion is too long and some objectives are not as important as others.
- Objectives should show whether or not there is an existing code or standard that could be used, but we should not just pick objectives that are currently measured or where data are available. In addition, we don’t want to develop complicated measures that take away implementation resources.
- The Partnership should try as much as possible to focus on setting threat reduction objectives. However, where these are not possible to set in the next six months, other performance targets more related to strategies and actions may need to be considered for key issues.
- This work is complicated. Some of the threat reduction objectives could be nested and others must be done in tandem (e.g., reduce per capita water consumption and reduce overall withdrawal in order to keep pace with population growth). Other measures need qualification to be accurate.
- Funding and enforcement are issues across all chains and need to be shown even without details.
- There clearly are important elements of this work that will not be addressed in time for the State of the Sound report. Communicate the work that is in progress or not complete, and give a sense for to the work plan to complete it, to give the whole picture.

Leadership Council guidance for State of the Sound report

Using the input from the September 29 meeting, staff presented the list of threat reduction objectives under development to the Leadership Council. The Council’s guidance is to include the attached threat reduction objectives in the State of the Sound report as a work in progress. They will be presented in the context of the overall performance management system development timeline with a decision on these (or a modification of them) and others in the spring.